

I drain my beer on that one,
then look at her:
"how the fuck did you get in here?"

I walk into the kitchen and find the
scotch, unpeel it and pour a hit as
the phone rings.

I hear her answer:

"who? I'll ask him ..."

I hear her walking toward me
in the kitchen
and I wonder why she doesn't already
know the answer
as I stand there holding the drink
watching the faucet leak
the way they do.

HORSE

as one goes to the racetrack for years one notices
certain characters who are there every day,
people who are poorly dressed and desperate of eye --
as I am.

there was one who actually stank badly, had this
diseased beard.

I often picked him up as he hitch-hiked and I believe
he slept in the bushes.

his theory was that all the jockeys got together in
the jocks' room before the races and they decided
which number to let in -- they chose a number and that
number won almost all day long and that's why all those
sons of bitches were rich: they bet that number.

and there was this one guy I had seen for years at all
the tracks, I was drunk and he bumped me with his elbow
and I said, "hey, Mac, watch that shit!" and he said,
"I got a mind to rub your face in the cement!" and
I said, "wait a minute," and I took my coat off and
laid it on a bench but when I turned around he was
gone.

I still see him at the tracks and the strangest thing
is that he is getting thinner and weaker and older and
I seem to be getting younger and stronger, but I don't
think it's me, I think it's him, I don't know what he's
on -- maybe a long string of losers.

then there's this blonde, she was always fat but it
didn't seem to matter, she had a way of picking up the
winners, some of the winners after the races, day after
day, she only bet the horses in a very off-hand manner
but now I see her in the clubhouse all dressed fine,
still fat, and she knows that I know but I don't say
anything. so I'm in the clubhouse too, so maybe I've
done some whoring in my own way.

there's another one, dresses dapper, smokes good cigars, but I know him, he never bets, he just pokes around in the trashcans for things, reaches his fingers into all those wet coffee containers, napkins, ripped tickets, old newspapers, stale hot dog buns, beer puke, he just reaches in there, inhaling on his cigar, a real freak.

then there's one who starts running when he sees something on the board late, they are putting them into the gate and he starts running toward the window like he's seen a message from the sky, and he's right, the last flash of the board is the most important but you can't win that way either, and he's so very poorly dressed and, come to think of it, I haven't seen him for some weeks now.

I think I've been around the track longer than any of them, I mean the bettors, maybe there are a lot of hot walkers, trainers, jocks who were there before me, well, maybe not the jocks but some of the hot walkers.

all my women (and there have been plenty of them) have said (as in one voice): "my god, every time you get drunk you start talking about the HORSES! you talk about the HORSES for hours! my god, what a dull subject! and there you write POEMS about the HORSES! my god, you don't know how dull your HORSE poems are! nobody understands them!"

here's another.

MY SOUL IS GONE

well, they warned me.

the phone rings.

I have just finished eating a grapefruit.

there are 3 telephones.

I pick up the one in the breakfast nook.

I am the man from the factories.

I am the one who has slept on park benches.

I am the one who tried 3 suicides and failed.

I am the one who lived with a half dozen whores.

I am the one who has been in two dozen drunk tanks.

I am the one who was accused of rape

and the one who was accused of draft dodging

when it was not the popular thing to do.

I pick up the phone: "yeh?"

"Bukowski?" he asks.

"yeh?"

it is the editor of one of the leading sex mags of our great nation.

"listen, we want you to write us a short story.

we haven't heard from you in a long time. what

you been doing?"